

IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of the claims replaces all prior versions of the claims in the application.

1-17. (canceled)

18. (currently amended): A method for screening chemical compounds for ability to compete with hepatitis C virus for binding to a ~~host cell~~ hepatitis C virus (HCV) receptor, comprising:

- (a) measuring the binding of a chemical compound to an unglycosylated, transmembrane protein having a molecular weight of about 24kd as determined by SDS PAGE and which binds to the E2 protein of hepatitis C virus wherein said protein is stable to acetone precipitation, ~~or a fragment thereof wherein said fragment is a truncated form of the protein that lacks a functional portion of a transmembrane domain and binds the E2 protein of hepatitis C virus~~; and
- (b) comparing the binding of said HCV receptor to the E2 protein in the presence of said chemical compound to the binding of said HCV receptor to the E2 protein in the absence of said chemical compound, wherein reduced binding of said HCV receptor to the E2 protein in the presence of said chemical compound is indicative of a chemical compound that competes with hepatitis C virus for binding to the HCV receptor.

19-23. (canceled)

24. (currently amended): The method of claim 18, wherein the protein is produced by a process comprising:

- (a) providing a ~~mammalian~~ human or chimpanzee cell that expresses said 24 kd protein;
- (b) recovering and solubilizing membranes from said ~~mammalian~~ cell to provide a cell membrane preparation;

- (c) subjecting the cell membrane preparation to ammonium sulfate precipitation at less than 33% saturation and retaining the supernatant;
- (d) subjecting the supernatant to ammonium sulfate precipitation at between 33% and 50% saturation and retaining the precipitate;
- (e) resuspending the precipitate;
- (f) subjecting the precipitate to hydrophobic interaction chromatography and recovering the nonretained material.

25. (currently amended): The method of claim 24, wherein the ~~mammalian~~ cell that expresses said 24 kd protein is a MOLT-4 cell that hyperexpresses said 24 kd protein.

26. (currently amended): The method of claim 25, wherein the ~~mammalian~~ cell is derived from a MOLT-4 cell that hyperexpresses said 24 kd protein.

27. (previously presented): The method of claim 26, wherein the cell membrane preparation is a plasma cell membrane preparation.

28. (currently amended): A method for screening for chemical compounds that ~~mimic the HCV surface structure that binds to the~~ a HCV receptor, comprising measuring the binding of a chemical compound to ~~an~~ said HCV receptor, wherein said receptor is an unglycosylated, transmembrane protein having a molecular weight of about 24kd as determined by SDS PAGE and which binds to the E2 protein of hepatitis C virus wherein said protein is stable to acetone precipitation, ~~or a fragment thereof wherein said fragment is a truncated form of the protein that lacks a functional portion of a transmembrane domain and binds the E2 protein of hepatitis C virus.~~

29. (currently amended): The method of claim 28, wherein the protein is produced by a process comprising:

- (a) providing a ~~mammalian~~ human or chimpanzee cell that expresses said 24 kd protein;

- (b) recovering and solubilizing membranes from said ~~mammalian~~ cell to provide a cell membrane preparation;
- (c) subjecting the cell membrane preparation to ammonium sulfate precipitation at less than 33% saturation and retaining the supernatant;
- (d) subjecting the supernatant to ammonium sulfate precipitation at between 33% and 50% saturation and retaining the precipitate;
- (e) resuspending the precipitate;
- (f) subjecting the precipitate to hydrophobic interaction chromatography and recovering the nonretained material.

30. (currently amended): The method of claim 29, wherein the ~~mammalian~~ cell that expresses said 24 kd protein is a MOLT-4 cell that hyperexpresses said 24 kd protein.

31. (currently amended): The method of claim 30, wherein the ~~mammalian~~ cell is derived from a MOLT-4 cell that hyperexpresses said 24 kd protein.

32. (previously presented): The method of claim 31, wherein the cell membrane preparation is a plasma cell membrane preparation.